

Furman University

To: University Librarian
From: Kristin "Krissa" Stewart
Date: 3/8/2021
Re: Donation and Collection

As a library, we have been presented with an opportunity that is both difficult to accept, and difficult to deny. Five million dollars is a lot of money, money that as a library, we could put to good use to do a lot of good for our University. Yet, the stipulation is one that is a bit difficult to accept as librarians, to include a collection of materials that deny the Holocaust into our own collection. Furman is a diverse community, with a Jewish population that may feel hurt or ignored if we include this collection in our library. Yet, as a library we are tasked with providing our students with information that can aid them in their work, their studies, and their research. While it may feel difficult, I believe our best course of action to best serve our community is to accept the donation, and the collection that comes with it.

The argument against these books being in our collection is a simple one. That these books are lies, spreading blatant misinformation against what is an objective fact of history. These books argue against the deaths of millions of people at the hands of a fascist regime. Holocaust denial is, in its simplest form, a conspiracy theory that does harm to large communities of people. Not many librarians would wish to include this many pieces on this subject within their library. But the fact that this information is fringe, even harmful, is part of the reason I think we should accept this donation.

This is not about keeping these books away from people, but rather about putting them in the hands of people who may have an interest in studying conspiracy theories. We have students studying psychology, anthropology, history, and even religion who would find these books informative and useful. Not because they do not believe in the holocaust, but rather because they may wish to study the psychology, culture, or actions of the people who believe in these sorts of conspiracy theories. As said in Gwen Evan's article *It's Not What Libraries Hold; It's Who Libraries Serve* "The business of an academic library is to support the educational and research mission of its parent institution" meaning that it is our job to provide our students and faculty researchers with what they may need to help with their projects.¹ Even if the books may make us feel uncomfortable, or may upset the community around us, sometimes they are needed to explore different disciplines that can further our knowledge of the world and its people.

As a real-life example, when I was in my undergraduate program, I had a classmate who wrote a thesis on Islamic extremism and ISIS. While doing research, he found that the books and essays written about ISIS could not really capture the extremism and beliefs of the group. To get a clearer picture of the people in ISIS, as well as their beliefs and how they present them, he had to read books, papers, and newspapers written by ISIS leaders, members, and escapees. With firsthand accounts and the words of believers, he was about to get a better understanding of their mental state and beliefs. I believe that this private collection can serve a similar purpose to any of our students looking to study group thinking or conspiracy theories. He had to go far into the debts of

¹ Evans, G. (2020, January 23). *It's not what libraries hold; it's who libraries serve*. <https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/its-not-what-libraries-hold-its-who-libraries-serve/>.

the internet to find these sources. There will always be a small demand for obscure, controversial works, but the demand is usually too low for it to show up in a Demand-Driven Acquisition system, a system in which we decide what to add to our collections by looking at what people use most often. Typically, we build our library collection based on trends of what our patrons check out and look for, but this gives us the chance to address an obscure demand that would usually push patrons to buy the materials they need from outside sources, while bringing in money for our library rather than losing money on these materials.²

But to do this, we will need to be sure to manage these new pieces of our collection carefully. Nowhere in this donor's stipulations does it say how we must present his collection. There is nothing that says we need to make a display with his books among them, or place them as an equal argument to historical truth. We do not even have to be shelved with other books about the Holocaust, fitting in better under Social Sciences than History. What is more, we do not have to draw attention to this collection when it is added. We have many collections in our library that our students have never heard of, and likely will never hear of unless they come looking for them. Similarly, we have many books within our library dealing with controversial topics, many taking an opinion we now see as morally wrong. Just because we have *Mien Knauf* within our collection does not mean we agree with it, but rather that we think it is important for it to be available to our community.

If we do feel the need to involve the community, we could present this collection to the relevant departments. Tell them we now have firsthand sources from members of a

² "Why DDA is here to stay" (PDF) ProQuest. June 2018 Collection development policies.

controversial group available for any projects and research they may wish to complete for papers and theses. State simply and bluntly about what has been added to our collection and how it can be used without being taken at face value.

We also need to take into consideration what five million dollars can do for our library. We are understaffed and underfunded at the moment, struggling to do programs that our community enjoys, looks forward to, and finds useful. We will be able to update our technology, invite in speakers, and hire more staff after having lost librarians to budget cuts. This amount of money is difficult to turn down, and with the argument above in mind, I see no reason why we should have to.

Starting with a separate budget for the five-million-dollar donation, I believe we should start by replacing some of the staff we have lost due to budget cuts. I propose hiring two new Librarians, one for our Reference Center and one for our Digital Collections department. Their salaries would come out at about \$55,000 each, with an additional \$11,935.68 each in university paid benefits. I also think we can hire six more student workers to aid various departments as needed. Paying them \$11/hr, at approximately 20 hours a week, taking out hours for holidays and summer vacation, the total amount for all six comes out at \$81,840. This would be an ongoing expense, that I believe we can budget for three years for from this donation.

Over the next three years, I believe we should also set some of this money aside for collections and programs. I have calculated that we can budget one million dollars per year for expanding our collections, in addition to our normal budget for collection management. The simplest way to split this would be equally four ways, with \$250,000 going to each of the four major parts of collections: physical books and journals, e-books,

licensing agreements, and audiobooks. We also have several annual programs, mostly small exhibits in our main library, but also an annual poetry month. I have budgeted \$20,000 for these programs over the next three years.

During the first year, I also think when should budget some money for guest speakers, enough to pay for their travel, hotels, meals, and time. I have estimated that this would come out at about \$400,000 for multiple speakers over the year, but this is a bit of an overestimation, leaving wiggle room for more guest speakers or more influential ones perhaps.

I have also budgeted for the upgrading of technology over this first year, both hardware and software. Technology goes out of date very quickly, and even though our computers, laptops, and tablets are relatively new, they are either already out of date or will be soon. It is best to get ahead of this issue while we have the funds too and upgrade our hardware and software.

With all of this accounted for we still have \$881,845.92 left over. I propose we set that aside as a contingency fund. Emergencies happen all the time. Technology breaks, buildings flood, things get lost and broken. Having a fund like this set aside like this, it could last us years barring any large emergencies.

Though the subject matter of the donated collection is controversial and completely untrue, I believe that is no reason to turn down this donation. Not only can the five-million-dollar budget do our library a lot of good, but books written by fringe groups rarely show up in university libraries and often times we have students who wish to study these groups. This collection will make their study easier, and the connected donation will help our library in numerous ways for years to come.

Budget 2021

- **Total Donation** **\$5,000,000**

2021

- **Operating Expense**
 - **Staffing** **\$215,711.36**
 - Reference Librarian³ \$55,000
 - Digital Collections Librarian⁴ \$55,000
 - Part-Time Student Workers (x6) \$81,840
 - Benefits for Full-Time Staff⁵ \$23,871.36
- **Collections** **\$1,000,000**
 - Physical Books and Journals \$250,000
 - E-books \$250,000
 - Licensing Agreements \$250,000
 - Audiobooks \$250,000
- **Guest Speakers** **\$400,000**
- **Programs** **\$20,000**
 - Exhibits \$10,000
 - Poetry Week \$10,000
- **Technology⁶** **\$31,000**
 - Hardware Updates \$25,000
 - Software Updates \$6,000
- **Contingency Funds** **\$881,845.92**

³ Salary.com, S. built by: *Librarian Salary in South Carolina*. Salary.com.
<https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/librarian-salary/sc>.

⁴ Salary.com, S. built by: *Digital Collection Librarian Salary in South Carolina*. Salary.com.
<https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/digital-collection-librarian-salary/sc>.

⁵ Furman University. (2021). 2021 Benefits Enrollment Guide. Greenville, SC.

⁶ OCLC. (2012, March 21). *Sample Technology Budget for a Small Library*. WebJunction.
https://www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/Sample_Technology_Budget_for_a_Small_Library.html.

2022

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○ Audiobooks	\$250,000
• Programs	\$20,000
○ Exhibits	\$10,000
○ Poetry Week	\$10,000

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